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TEXT

TAGS: SOCI, PINS, MOPS, FR
SUBJECT: WAR CRIMES - THE CASE OF MAURICE PAPON

1. SUMMARY: A CASE OF ALLEGED WAR CRIMES INVOLVING AN RPR POLITICIAN WHO SERVED IN BARRE'S THIRD PRIME MINISTERSHIP IS CURRENTLY RESURFACING IN THE BORDEAUX COURTS, HAVING BEGUN ITS TORTUOUS LEGAL PROGRESS IN 1981. FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS UP TO NOW. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

2. THE 1987 TRIAL IN LYON OF THE REGIONAL GESTAPO CHIEF DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR (KLAUS BARBIE) REVIVED INTEREST THROUGHOUT FRANCE IN A NUMBER OF LESS WELL-KNOWN WAR CRIMES CASES THAT HAD REMAINED UNRESOLVED AND HAD FALLEN MORE OR LESS OUT OF PUBLIC SIGHT. ONE OF THESE CASES, THAT OF MAURICE PAPON, IS HISTORICALLY LINKED TO THE BORDEAUX REGION WHERE PAPON IS ALLEGED TO HAVE COMMITTED QUOTE CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY UNQUOTE WHILE SERVING AS SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE GIRONDE DEPARTMENT FROM JUNE 1942 TO AUGUST 1944. THIS CASE WOULD

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BE MERELY OF HISTORICAL INTEREST TO ALL BUT THE PEOPLE INVOLVED BUT FOR THE FACT THAT PAPON'S POSTWAR POLITICAL CAREER AS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT (1968-1978) OF THE (NEO-GAULLIST) RPR PARTY, ELECTED FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE CHER IN CENTRAL FRANCE, AND HIS APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER OF THE BUDGET (1978-1981) IN THE GOVERNMENT OF UDF (CENTER-RIGHT) LEADER RAYMOND BARRE LINKS PAPON IN THE RECENT PAST TO THE MAJOR PARTIES OF THE FRENCH NATIONAL RIGHT AND CENTER-RIGHT.

3. THE CASE INVOLVES MAURICE PAPON WHO WAS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE PREFECTURE OF THE GIRONDE (SECOND RANKING CIVIL SERVICE JOB IN THE DEPARTMENT) FROM JUNE, 1942, TO AUGUST, 1944. (NOTE: DURING THIS TIME, BORDEAUX WAS OCCUPIED BY THE GERMAN ARMY AND WAS NOT/NOT A PART OF VICHY FRANCE.) IT IS ALLEGED THAT, DURING THIS PERIOD, MR. PAPON IN HIS OFFICIAL CAPACITY SIGNED A NUMBER OF OFFICIAL DEPARTMENTAL ORDERS/INSTRUCTIONS/DECREEES THAT EXPLICITLY LED TO THE DEPORTATION, AND SUBSEQUENT DEATH, OF NEARLY SEVENTEEN HUNDRED BORDEAUX JEWS, INCLUDING DOZENS OF CHILDREN, SOME AS YOUNG AS ONE YEAR OLD.

4. FOR A YEAR OF TWO AFTER THE WAR, IT APPEARS, MR. PAPON WAS UNDER A BIT OF A CLOUD BUT THEN HE SUCCESSFULLY CONTINUED HIS PROFESSIONAL CIVIL SERVICE CAREER. IN 1974 HE WAS MADE PREFECT OF CORSICA AND IN 1949 HE BECAME PREFECT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSTANTINE (FRENCH ALGERIA). FROM MID-1956 TO EARLY 1958 HE WAS INSPECTOR GENERAL OF DEPARTMENTS IN EAST (FRENCH) ALGERIA AND IN 1958 HIS CIVIL SERVICE CAREER REACHED ITS APOGEE WITH HIS APPOINTMENT TO THE COVETED POSITION OF PREFECT OF POLICE FOR PARIS, A JOB HE CONTINUED TO HOLD (UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF GENERAL DE GAULLE) UNTIL 1966. MR. PAPON THEN LEFT THE CIVIL SERVICE AFTER 33 YEARS, AND FOR TWO YEARS WAS MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SUD-AVIATION (SINCE 1970 A DIVISION OF AEROSPATIALE BUT AT THAT TIME FRANCE'S LEADING INDEPENDENT MANUFACTURER OF CIVIL AIRCRAFT, SUCH AS THE CARAVELLE.) MR. PAPON THEN ENTERED POLITICS AND, IN JUNE, 1968, HE WAS ELECTED AN RPR (NEO-GAULLIST) MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT (DEPUTY) FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE CHER, LOCATED IN THE MIDDLE OF FRANCE. HE WAS TWICE RE-ELECTED (1973 AND 1978). PAPON RESIGNED HIS PARLIAMENTARY SEAT IN APRIL 1978, AS REQUIRED BY FRENCH LAW, WHEN HE BECAME FRENCH MINISTER OF THE BUDGET IN THE THIRD GOVERNMENT OF RAYMOND BARRE (WHICH FELL WITH THE ELECTION OF MITTERRAND AS PRESIDENT IN MAY 1981). PAPON CHOSE NOT/NOT TO PRESENT HIMSELF TO THE VOTERS FOR POSSIBLE RE-ELECTION TO PARLIAMENT IN 1981 AND RETIRED DEFINITELY FROM POLITICS AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY-ONE.
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5. ONE OF THE REASONS FOR THIS DECISION MAY HAVE BEEN THAT PAPONS ALLEGED PAST HAD RETURNED TO HAUNT HIM A FEW MONTHS EARLIER WHEN, IN MARCH 1981, THE PARIS SATIRICAL AND MUCK-RAKING WEEKLY QUOTE LE CANARD ENCHAINE UNQUOTE CARRIED A LEAD ARTICLE ACCUSING HIM OF BEING DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE DEPORTATION OF OVER 1690 BORDEAUX JEWS BETWEEN 1942 AND 1944. DENYING THE CHARGES AND CLAIMING TO HAVE BEEN ACTIVE IN THE RESISTANCE, MR. PAPON CALLED FOR A QUOTE JURY OF HONOR UNQUOTE TO BE FORMED TO CLEAR HIS

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NAME. ALLEGEDLY, THE JURY OF HONOR DULY CITED PAPON'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RESISTANCE.

6. HOWEVER, BY MID-1982, SERGE KLARSFELD, THE FAMOUS FRENCH WAR-CRIMINAL-HUNTER WHO EVENTUALLY CAUGHT **KLAUS BARBIE**, HAD ENTERED THE CASE AND HAD FILED A FORMAL LEGAL COMPLAINT AGAINST PAPON IN THE BORDEAUX COURTS. THIS FILING WAS A SIGNIFICANT STEP IN THE LONG, AND STILL UNRESOLVED, LEGAL BATTLE OF CHARGES, COUNTER-CHARGES, INDICTMENTS, DISMISSALS FOR JURISDICTIONAL REASONS, RE-OPENINGS, ETC., ETC.

7. IN THE MEANWHILE, STARTING IN MAY, 1983, MR. PAPON HAS HIMSELF INITIATED AND BEEN LEADING A (SO FAR BASICALLY UNSUCCESSFUL) LEGAL BATTLE TO SUPPRESS AN ACCUSATORY, AND TWICE RE-PRINTED, BOOK ABOUT HIM ENTITLED, QUOTE MAURICE PAPON UNQUOTE BY MICHEL SLITENSKY.

CURRENT STATUS

8. THE SEVENTY-EIGHT YEAR OLD MAURICE PAPON IS ALLEGED TO HAVE ONCE AGAIN BEEN INDICTED (INCULPE) IN JUNE OR JULY, 1988, ALTHOUGH NO ANNOUNCEMENT TO THAT EFFECT WAS MADE BY THE COURT OF APPEALS IN BORDEAUX AND THE COURT THUS FAR HAS REFUSED TO CONFIRM OR DENY WHETHER THIS INDICTMENT HAS TAKEN PLACE. (THE OCTOBER 14, 1988 ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE INDICTMENT WAS MADE BY ONE OF THE LAWYERS FOR THE FAMILIES OF ALLEGED VICTIMS OF THE BORDEAUX DEPORTATIONS. ACCORDING TO HIM, PAPON WAS INDICTED LAST JULY AND HIS WARTIME BOSS, THE THEN PREFECT OF GIRONDE, MAURICE SABATIER (NOW 91 YEARS OLD) WAS INDICTED IN OCTOBER 1988.)

9. WHATEVER ITS STATUS, THE CASE IS CURRENTLY IN THE HANDS OF THE BORDEAUX APPEALS COURTSS QUOTE CHAMBRE DACCUSATION UNQUOTE (MORE OR LESS A PROSECUTORS OFFICE) WHICH IS HEARING THIS WEEK THE TESTIMONY OF TWO GROUPS OF WITNESSES WHO ARE CIVIL PARTIES TO THE PAPON CASE: THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE AGAINST RACISM ANDS ANTISEMITISM (LICRA) AND THE MOVEMENT AGAINST RACISM AND FOR FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLES (MRAP).
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END OF MESSAGE

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